

"It's frankly just deeply upsetting," said James D. Weill, president of the Washington-based Food and Action Center. As the economy eroded, Weill said, "you had more and more people getting pushed closer to the cliffs edge. Then this huge storm came along and pushed them over."

Obama, who pledged during last year's presidential campaign to eliminate hunger among children by 2015, reiterated that goal on Monday. "My Administration is committed to reversing the trend of rising hunger," the president said in a statement. The solution begins with job creation, Obama said. And he ticked off steps that Congress and the administration have taken, or are planning, including increases in food stamp benefits and \$85 million Congress just freed up through an appropriations bill to experiment with feeding more children during the summer, when subsidized school breakfasts and lunches are unavailable.

In a briefing for reporters, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said, "These numbers are a wake-up call . . . for us to get very serious about food security and hunger, about nutrition and food safety in this country."

Vilsack attributed the marked worsening in Americans' access to food primarily to the rise in unemployment, which now exceeds 10 percent, and in people who are underemployed. He acknowledged that "there could be additional increases" in the 2009 figures, due out a year from now, although he said it is not yet clear how much the problem might be eased by the measures the administration and Congress have taken this year to stimulate the economy.

The report's main author at USDA, Mark Nord, noted that other recent research by the agency has found that most families in which food is scarce contain at least one adult with a full-time job, suggesting that the problem lies at least partly in wages, not entirely an absence of work.

The report suggests that federal food assistance programs are only partly fulfilling their purpose, although Vilsack said that shortages would be much worse without them. Just more than half of the people surveyed who reported they had food shortages said that they had, in the previous month, participated in one of the government's largest anti-hunger and nutrition programs: food stamps, subsidized school lunches or WIC, the nutrition program for women with babies or young children.

Last year, people in 4.8 million households used private food pantries, compared with 3.9 million in 2007, while people in about 625,000 households resorted to soup kitchens, nearly 90,000 more than the year before.

Food shortages, the report shows, are particularly pronounced among women raising children alone. Last year, more than one in three single mothers reported that they struggled for food, and more than one in seven said that someone in their home had been hungry—far eclipsing the food problem in any other kind of household. The report also found that people who are black or Hispanic were more than twice as likely as whites to report that food in their home was scarce.

In the survey used to measure food shortages, people were considered to have food insecurity if they answered "yes" to several of a series of questions. Among the questions were whether, in the past year, their food sometimes ran out before they had money to buy more, whether they could not afford to eat nutritionally balanced meals, and whether adults in the family sometimes cut the size of their meals—or skipped them—because they lacked money for food. The report defined the degree of their food insecurity by the number of the questions to which they answered yes.

ANIMAL WELFARE IS IMPORTANT FOR THE ENTIRE NATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, it seems the issues that face Congress fall into two categories: the issues that are so great, so expensive, so contentious, so complex that they seem almost beyond our ability to influence—war and peace, the economy, climate change and, more recently, health care—too big and too controversial for effective, quick, meaningful congressional action. The other category seems to be the simple and the mundane, almost too routine—housekeeping, like renaming a post office.

The truth is, we pursue both because they're an important part of our job and are important to the American public. We're not going to give up on the big issues of the day no matter how complex, controversial and frustrating because, after all, they are the big issues of the day. That's why we're here when even modest impact can have a huge ripple effect on lives around the world, the safety of Americans, protecting the public Treasury and our soldiers. A post office may seem mundane and trivial to some, but to the family of that fallen hero and community, it's very important indeed, as it is to all Americans who honor and respect that sacrifice. There is a reason for these items, low cost but high impact. Then there are vast numbers of issues that are sort of in between. Animal welfare is often put in that category, seemingly at times unimportant or trivial, tangential—except, of course, when it has a devastating impact on human health, safety and environmental balance.

I was recently touring the Everglades with my colleague DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Part of the briefing materials dealt with the problem of up to 100,000 pythons that started out as pets or exotic curiosities and ended up in that environment. Pets, farm animals, even whole alligators have been attacked and ingested. Earlier this summer, an infant in its crib was strangled by a python. Too expensive? Secondary? What's the price of that baby's life? And how much are we going to try to spend to reclaim the Everglade habitat from tens of thousands of pythons that have been described as the most lethal killing machine ever?

Earlier this year, I had legislation that overwhelmingly passed this House to ban the interstate transport of primates. It had been derided by one of my colleagues as a "monkey bite bill," ironically at just the same time a woman in Connecticut had her face ripped off by a neighbor's pet chimpanzee. I don't use that term metaphorically. Her face was literally ripped off. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the woman who was so horribly disfigured had the courage to take her story and her mangled face to the public on The

Oprah Winfrey Show this week. I simply cannot bring myself to display the picture on the floor of the House, but millions of viewers saw the tragic evidence for themselves.

It's too late for this woman and her family, but it's not too late for the other body to act so that we can make events like this less likely. It's a symbol of the dysfunctionality of the other body that one Member—ironically a doctor, of all people—has put a hold on this legislation, refusing to allow the Senate to even consider it, and inexplicably, the other body goes along. The reason, we're told, is cost. The Senator is concerned about cost. Well, what is the cost to a woman whose eyes were torn out of her head so she couldn't see her daughter on prom night? What is the cost of the unbelievable reconstructive surgery, taking flesh from her leg to try to replace part of the missing face?

Mr. Speaker, animal welfare is about much more than concern for God's creatures. It's about human welfare. It's about environmental balance. And yes, to the good doctor from Oklahoma, it's about saving money.

The millions of Americans who watched The Oprah Winfrey Show saw the tragic case and its consequences. They should ask themselves why their Senators are not speaking out, why the other body is not passing this simple bill that can have such significant consequences. It may not change the world, but if it prevents just a few cases like this, it will be another example of simple legislation that we cannot afford not to pass.

SUPPORT FOR THE AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE FOR AMERICA ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CONNOLLY) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. I rise today to commend those who have endeavored to improve the provision of quality, affordable health care for all Americans and to refute those who use scare tactics to derail essential health insurance reform.

During the more than 12 hours of debate on the House floor on November 7, we heard a number of speeches from some forecasting various doom and gloom scenarios. Some of the material focused more on scaring the American public than on presenting actual facts. We heard preposterous stories of death panels and prisons, denial of care and dramatic cuts in services, but the purveyors of fear ignored the hundreds of groups across the Nation that saw through the scare tactics and who support responsible health insurance reform. Those groups aren't driven by partisan ideology. They're focused on the well-being of their members. I would like to highlight just a few.

The scare tactic said this bill will harm seniors. In actuality, the Affordable Health Care for America Act will help seniors by closing the Medicare